

Year	No. of cases unearthened.	Value of foreign exchange seized
1995	79	Rs. 2.17 crores
1996	52	Rs. 5.46 "
1997	6	Rs. 0.23 "

(Upto Feb., 1997)

(d) The Enforcement Directorate keeps a regular vigil on the activities of foreign exchange racketeers. Actions as envisaged in the statutes are taken as and when any such case comes to the notice of the Directorate.

Import of Newprint

3143. DR. MAHADEEPAK SINGH SHAKYA:
SHRI SURENDRA YADAV:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether large quantity of newsprint was imported during 1996-97;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is resulted in surplus stock of foreign newsprint in the country and it has also affected the production of domestic newsprint;

(d) if so, the reasons for such imports;

(e) whether the Government have investigated the matter;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor and the remedial steps taken by the Government to save the domestic industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (g) Import of Newsprint had been permitted freely since 01.05.1995 without any restriction. Import of newsprint being free, it would be difficult to confirm that imports have resulted in surplus stock of foreign newsprint in the country affecting production of domestic newsprint.

However, keeping in view the interests of domestic newsprint industries, newsprint has since been restricted for import by Actual Users only since 29.01.1997.

[English]

Jammu B-2 City

3144. SHRI GULAM MOHD. MIR MAGANI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have received any proposal from the State Government of Jammu and

Kashmir regarding declaration of Jammu City as B-2 city; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) Representations have been received to upgrade Jammu City from 'C' Class to 'B-2' Class for the purposes of House Rent Allowance. According to the existing policy, cities/towns are classified for grant of House Rent Allowance on the basis of their population as reflected in the decennial Census. A city having a population above 4 lakhs but below 8 lakhs, within its municipal limits, is classified as 'B-2' class city for HRA. The current classification is based on 1991 Census. The Census could not, however, be conducted in Jammu due to unavoidable reasons. The Registrar General and Census Commissioner (RGI) has indicated the estimated population of Jammu City in 1991 to be 2.76 lakhs. Since this is below the bench mark for classification as 'B-2' class, Jammu is classified as 'C' class city for HRA.

The proposal under consideration is to upgrade Jammu city as 'B-2' class taking into account the migrant population.

[Translation]

Production of Opium

3145. DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the percentage of morphine is less in the opium which is produced in India;

(b) whether on account of this it is sold on low price in the international market which resulted loss to the Indian farmers; and

(c) If so, the measures being taken for the development of new seed and to save the crop from disease?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) The percentage of morphine in Indian opium, as confirmed by Chemical analysis reports, ranges between 9.5 to 11.5. It is not possible to compare the morphine content of such opium vis-a-vis other countries' produce since India is the sole producer of licit opium gum in the world.

(b) Indian opium commands a good price in the international market because of its morphine and other important alkaloid contents. There is no loss to the Indian farmers, on account of morphine content of opium, because payments to cultivators are made on the basis of consistency of opium i.e. percentage of water and other adultrants, if any, therein rather than the morphine content of opium.

(c) The Agricultural Colleges and Research Institutes in the three poppy growing states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are engaged in conducting research to develop high Morphine content and disease resistant varieties of opium poppy seeds. The K.N.K.

College of Agriculture Mandsaur, the Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic plants (CIMAP) and National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) at Lucknow have done notable work in this area. The office of the Central Bureau of Narcotics has been taking suitable steps to disseminate the results of such studies for the benefit of the opium cultivators in the above areas.

Soiled Notes

3146. SHRI BHAGWAN SHANKAR RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India has imported a machine from Germany for destroying several mutilated and soiled currency notes; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Two currency disintegrator and briquetting system have been imported from M/s. Giesecke and Devrient GmbH, Germany which are in operation since December, 1996 at the Reserve Bank of India's New Delhi office. The system is an integrated unit with a capacity of 300 Kgs of currency notes per hour and comprises the following features:

- (i) Electromechanical belt conveyor: This conveys the notes into the granulator.
- (ii) Prescrusher/Granulator: The prescrusher crushes the note bundles into small pieces. They are then granulated into small granules (3mm x 3mm) by means of fixed/moveable knives.
- (iii) Briquetting unit: The granules are then sucked from the granulator through a blower fan and compressed into '2' diameter briquettes by a compression pump.

This method of destroying notes is environment friendly as the process is devoid of any smoke emission.

Salt Industries

3147. SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA.
SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Salt industries functioning in Public Sector in the country;

(b) whether any special efforts are being made to promote the export of salt by increasing its production;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Six salt works are functioning in Public Sector.

(b) to (d) Yes, Sir. The following measures have been initiated to promote export by increasing salt production:-

- (i) Salt exports have been exempted from the levy of cess.
- (ii) Railway is accorded 'B' Priority for export of salt by rail.
- (iii) Establishment of 100% export oriented units (EOU) is being encouraged.
- (iv) Long term and short term measures are taken to improve the salt loading rate at Kandla Port.
- (v) Setting up of salt refineries is being encouraged to meet the demand of high grade salt.

[English]

Demonstration by All India Gramin Bank Workers

3148. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether officers and workers of the All India Gramin Bank held country-wide demonstrations on January 28, 1997 to protest against the negative attitude of the Government towards their demands;

(b) if so, the details of their demands; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to meet their demands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (c) Some of the Associations of Officers and Employees of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), inter-alia, including All India Gramin Bank Workers Organisation and All India Gramin Bank Officers Association have represented against non-implementation of the VIth Bipartite Settlement in favour of RRB employees.

As regards the extension of Sixty Bipartite Agreement between employees, Officers of Commercial Banks and Indian Banks' Association to the employees of RRBs, the matter was taken by some of the RRB employees to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court, however did not grant any relief and instead observed that they may seek reliefs available to them under the Industrial disputes Act.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have appointed a three member Committee to examine and suggest the changes in the salary and allowances of the employees of RRBs, which may be considered desirable and feasible. It is expected that the employees will present their view point before the Committee so that it can make considered recommendations on their demands.

Turnover of STC

3149. SHRI DHIRENDRA AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the total business as well as the turnover of the STC is going down;